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ABSTRACT

This annual report details the activities of the National Association of Child Advocates (NACA) from June 2001 to June 2002. The report discusses the efforts of NACA to help members protect funding levels for programs supporting children and their families during the nation's economic downturn, including conducting focus groups to test specific messages and providing information about the public's perception of various child and family programs and policies. Also emphasized is providing information to NACA members by means of legislative updates, strategic advice, fact sheets, talking points, and sample opinion/editorial pieces to help them influence Congressional members. The report describes Project Excel, an initiative to improve the effectiveness of multi-issue child advocacy organizations. Key components of the project include identifying essential elements of an effective child advocacy organization and translating research findings into advocacy tools. The report also describes several initiatives to build members' knowledge of policies affecting children and their knowledge on strategies to move their child advocacy agendas forward, including the Child Safe Initiative and the 2001 Self-Sufficiency Standard Summit. Efforts to improve visibility and awareness of child advocacy include a member organization survey to identify top issues affecting children and families in each state. Work to strengthen NACA and nurture the network infrastructure relating to the structure of the board of trustees, the financial management and control system, fund development, and a partnership with a discount office supply company. The report concludes with a breakdown of NACA's financial support and a description of the organization's foci for 2002-2003. (KB)

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National Association of Child Advocates 2001-2002 Annual Report from the President.

Tamara Lucas Copeland

National Association of Child Advocates.

June 2002

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The National Association of Child Advocates

2001 / 2002

Annual Report *from the President*

Overarching Events and Priorities

Last July when NACA released its annual report, the world was a much different place. While no one then could have foreseen the horrific events of September 11th, they are a stark reality to this year's readers. The events proved to have a ripple effect, changing forever our sense of safety in this country and leading to a war on terrorism and heightened domestic security that ultimately affected the work of child advocates during the 2002 legislative sessions. The downward spiral of the nation's economy, combined with the aftermath of that fateful day, provided a powerful overlay for the work of NACA members across the country. And NACA was there to support its members as they worked on this and other pressing issues. ☆ While everything in the country was in some way impacted by these major events, NACA's overarching priorities were not greatly altered. NACA continued to undertake a variety of efforts to improve the capacity of its members. Indeed, NACA made a great deal of progress in many areas. The organization developed new partnerships and efforts to help its members build upon their policy work and strategy skills. It also used different strategies to increase the visibility of its members and of the issues affecting children and implemented approaches to strengthen NACA's infrastructure. All of this was accomplished while NACA continued to provide, and even enhance, its ongoing services. ☆ It was a challenging year for the organization and the network at large but it was also a productive one – full of accomplishments that will ultimately improve the lives of children across this great nation for years to come. The following are highlights of NACA's most significant accomplishments from June 2001 to June 2002.

Addressing Nationwide Concerns

Funding for programs that support children and their families was jeopardized in most states because of the country's economic downturn. NACA made significant efforts to help members protect funding levels for programs at a time when they are very much needed.

Message Development on State Budgets

When it became apparent that states across the country were facing tremendous budget shortfalls, NACA stepped forward to develop messages that would help child advocates retain funding for children's programs and policies in the face of drastic budget cuts. Thanks to the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, NACA was provided the opportunity to work with Peter D. Hart Research Associates to determine how best to communicate the need for funding for children's programs. With message development assistance from public relations firm Golin/Harris International, focus groups were conducted to test specific messages and provide information about the public's perception of various child and family programs and policies. This information was relayed in writing and discussed in a conference call to ensure that all NACA and KIDS COUNT member organizations could benefit from the findings and use them to save funding for programs and policies affecting children.

"When NACA learned that members needed help developing messages to secure funding for children's programs in the wake of September 11, it took up the challenge and found a way to fill that need and support our efforts."

— Carol Kamin, Executive Director, Children's Action Alliance (Arizona)

Reauthorization of Key Federal Programs

This is an important time for working families, as legislation to reauthorize the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and Child Care Development Block Grants and the Food Stamp Program has come before Congress. Because this legislation will affect funding for many state children's programs, NACA has taken a proactive

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approach by visiting Capitol Hill to educate members of Congress who will have an important say in funding levels and requirements for these three programs. NACA provides its members with a constant flow of information including regular updates, strategic advice, fact sheets, talking points, and sample opinion/editorial pieces. Through participation in the Effective Messaging initiative managed by the Benton Foundation's Connect for Kids Project, NACA has provided members with messaging information and connected them to communications consultants to provide individual advice on reauthorization strategies in their states. Through partnerships with the Coalition on Human Needs and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, NACA also linked members to other national organizations working on these policies.

"The NACA network is made up of advocates who work at the state and local levels—rarely at the national level. Yet, many federal issues have tremendous long-term impact on the children and youth in each state. This year, when Congress began debating the reauthorization of public assistance programs, NACA jumped right in to provide us with accurate and up-to-date information on these issues, so that we could better communicate our concerns."

— Anne Roberts, Executive Director, Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy

Nurturing Organizational Growth and Effectiveness of Members

NACA's mission is "to improve the lives of children in the United States by enhancing the capacity of its member organizations to effectively advocate on behalf of children and their families." While all of NACA's work supports this objective, Project Excel, a two-year, multi-pronged initiative funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, was developed to directly impact the effectiveness of multi-issue child advocacy organizations.

Essential Elements

This Project Excel initiative is perhaps the most exciting for NACA and NACA member organizations as it will determine what the essential elements of an effective child advocacy organization are. While NACA members are all professionally run, there has never before been a structured roadmap to help child advocates secure outcomes for children.

"We are very pleased and excited about NACA's efforts to determine the characteristics essential to effective child advocacy. This is a field with few objective guidelines. The Essential Elements initiative will provide a roadmap to help established organizations become even more effective and new or struggling organizations understand how to succeed."

— Kathleen Reich, Policy Analyst/Editor, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

The Essential Elements effort will do just that and, as such, it will undergird NACA's training and technical assistance for years to come. To that end, the Essential Elements project is viewed as a linchpin.

This year, with the assistance of the Essential Elements Advisory Committee and input from NACA members, the programmatic and organizational elements have been identified. An implementation process has been defined, and pilot test sites have been chosen. It continues to be felt that Essential Elements will provide child advocates with objective criteria for effectiveness that can be used by current and future executive directors and boards of NACA members to build and strengthen their organizations while helping to ensure that children across the country are represented by the most effective advocates possible.

Translating Research Into Advocacy

Child advocates rely on research to determine which issues are of greatest importance *to* children and which policies and programs are in the best interests *of* children. Understanding this, NACA developed Project Excel's Translating Research Into Advocacy initiative to enhance its membership's ability to use and understand research as well as to communicate to researchers where there are important gaps in the research.

In November 2001, this initiative included a conference, "Translating Research into Advocacy: The Impact of Welfare Reform on Children and Families," which brought together both advocates and researchers to discuss the research on how welfare reform has affected children and to identify policy concerns and goals from that research. NACA also released two important publications:

Understanding Research: Top Ten Tips for Advocates and Policymakers—a fact sheet developed to show how to effectively and accurately analyze research and how to determine the credibility of research findings. Because research findings can significantly influence public policy, NACA produced this fact sheet to provide NACA members, journalists and other interested parties with a full understanding of how to interpret the information.

Welfare to Work: Does it Work for Kids?—a fact sheet compiled of research on the welfare-to-work program's impact on kids. This publication, which was disseminated to NACA members and all 535 members of Congress, demonstrated key research findings on how the welfare-to-work programs affect children, from infancy to adolescence. The publication also provided recommendations on what the research implications are for policy.

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Supporting Policy Work and Strategic Advocacy

Securing legislative gains for children, youth and families is important to the work of child advocates. NACA took on several efforts this year to build its member organizations' knowledge of policies affecting children and increased its level of technical assistance and information on strategies to move their child advocacy agendas forward.

The Better Baby Care State Advocacy Project

Funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation is enabling NACA to launch a new initiative to affect infant and toddler care policies. This project includes funding for pass-through grants to six members that propose projects that build upon a set of Packard Foundation recommendations for infant/toddler care and seek to influence policies affecting their care, such as parental leave, child care subsidy levels, and child care quality, among others. Through its members, NACA hopes to move forward an infant/toddler policy agenda at the state level.

The Child Safe Initiative

The Child Safe Initiative was developed with the Joyce Foundation to enable NACA and its members to use the lessons of public health to reduce the number of children killed or injured by guns in the United States. Pass-through grants were awarded to five NACA member organizations that began gun policy projects that will continue over the next three years. NACA also provided gun policy resources to members through a two-day meeting, "Child Safe: Gun Policy for Child Advocates," and a policy manual, *A Child Advocate's Guide to State Gun Policy Options: What Works, What Doesn't and What's Promising.* In addition, NACA continues to provide message development support around gun policy.

School-Based Health Care Advocacy

NACA began a partnership with the National Assembly on School-Based Health Care (NASBHC) to increase NACA members' awareness of the policy issues involved in school-based health care. Thanks to funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, NACA now provides advocacy support to NASBHC affiliates which includes advocacy training by NACA members at state School-Based Health Care Association meetings in three states. The work includes the production of three publications highlighting the advocacy work of NASBHC affiliates, and a guide to budget advocacy for school-based health care advocates. In addition, NACA staff developed an intensive, two-day training for NASBHC members, which was held in conjunction with NASBHC's annual meeting in June 2002 in Denver.

2001 Self-Sufficiency Standard Summit

In July, NACA partnered with Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) and held a summit to explore opportunities to use the Self-Sufficiency Standard, a tool which calculates a family's minimum income needs by locality based on family size, structure and age of children. With funding from the Ford Foundation, NACA and WOW reached out to NACA members in a number of states to develop and release the Self-Sufficiency Standard in their states. Four NACA members have now released the standard and two more have their state's standard in preparation. The Self-Sufficiency Standard documents the true cost of living to aid advocates as they push for a whole range of services/supports to assist families. Because it is calculated by county and major metropolitan region, it allows NACA members to provide legislators with targeted information about the number of families eligible for proposed programs in their legislative district.

2001 Agenda-Setting Seminar

As multi-issue organizations, NACA members must set legislative priorities across a wide range of program areas; to move their legislative agendas, they need to develop a broad base of support for the priorities they set. This meeting, supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and also hosted in July, allowed NACA members to share their approaches to setting policy agendas, and strategies for engaging community members in both defining and pursuing their policy goals.

"When we realized our network of school-based health centers needed advocacy training, NACA was the obvious partner. NACA knows child advocacy. Its staff members know what works and what doesn't work to help establish programs and policies for children."

— John Schlitt, Executive Director, NASBHC

Developing a City/County Voice in Child Advocacy

In December 2001, NACA member executive directors from San Francisco's Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth and Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth led a two-day skill-building and networking session designed to help NACA members expand their knowledge and confidence in advocating for children in city halls or before county commissioners. At the Annie E. Casey Foundation-funded "Developing a City/County Voice in Child Advocacy," participants tackled strategic planning for initiatives which are best begun on the local level and focused on how and why child advocates establish a local voice, examine budgets, work with electoral races, put more "feet on the street," and point the media toward opportunities to bring children's issues into the public debate.

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Increasing Visibility

Public visibility and awareness of child advocacy is crucial to securing gains for children as well as funding for child advocacy organizations. In addition to NACA's ongoing efforts to educate the foundation community, national organizations, and others about its members' efforts, NACA also developed and released a report to help educate the media about the expertise of its member organizations' executive directors — many of whom work collaboratively with other organizations and don't always get the credit they deserve. NACA also began planning for a new, more public-friendly website to help those interested in children's issues easily access resources and information about the NACA member nearest them.

Project Visibility

A generous grant from the Prudential Foundation allowed NACA to survey the executive directors of its member organizations to determine the top issues affecting children and families in each state and their organizations' top 2002 priorities. The survey culminated in a 90-page book, *Speaking for America's Children*, which was unveiled with assistance from several NACA member executive directors at the National Press Club. The book was sent to major newspapers across the country and will continue to serve as a useful resource for reporters, allowing them to tap into NACA's network. Journalists from the Associated Press, *The Los Angeles Times* and other notable media outlets attended the news conference and expressed interest in the publication.

NACA's Web Site

Modern technology offers a wonderful opportunity to get messages out quickly to large numbers of people using the World Wide Web. With that in mind, this year NACA began making improvements to its web site and, thanks to funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, planning for a new, more user-friendly site. While the planning for the new site is still in its infancy, improvements have been made to the current site to enable easier access for NACA members to the Members Only Forum and more frequent updates on relevant topics. The site continues to provide information about, and links to, NACA member organizations.

Strengthening NACA and Nurturing the Network Infrastructure

NACA's Board of Trustees

Under the leadership of Board Chair Valora Washington, NACA's Board of Trustees adopted a new structure and process to enable it to spend more time on strategic thinking and less time on the day-to-day business details for which staff are responsible. The Board's new forward focus has been responsible for NACA's new efforts to address nationwide concerns and to the pairing of Board members with NACA member organization executive directors to help NACA meet members' needs. (NACA's Board Officers are listed on the back.)

NACA's Internal Operations

Significant time was devoted this year to reviewing NACA's financial management and control system and its human resource management and benefits pool. A major overhaul was undertaken in both arenas, which resulted in a new financial operations manual and a revised personnel manual. These changes will lead to a strengthened NACA, better able to survive as a strong, sustainable organization.

In addition to these changes, NACA promoted one long-time staff member and hired five new employees to oversee several crucial areas. NACA hired an Accountant; a Policy and Advocacy Specialist, responsible for income supports and child welfare; a Policy and Advocacy Specialist, overseeing early care and education and health; an Information Support Specialist and an Assistant to the President. Additionally, NACA's office assistant was promoted to Office Manager.

Fund Development

NACA is supported almost exclusively by the foundation community. Despite funding reductions by several of NACA's foundation supporters, NACA is pleased to report that this past year was extremely successful from a fundraising standpoint. The next page includes a list of NACA funders and a pie-chart illustrating NACA's sources of funds.

Quill Office Products Partnership

In an effort to help NACA and the network operate more efficiently by pooling resources, NACA entered into a relationship with The Quill Alliance, a discount office products company owned by Staples, Inc. Through this relationship, NACA member organizations are now eligible for an additional 10% discount off of Quill's already reduced prices. Further, NACA receives a royalty for major purchases made by members of the network. While this has not yet provided NACA any significant income, more than 30 NACA members have registered for the program and are eligible for significant discounts on everything from office furniture to basic supplies.

"When we were considering organizations with which to partner, NACA came to mind immediately. Members of NACA's network are the experts on state and local issues affecting children. They know what is available and what should be made available to make sure kids in this country are healthy, educated, safe and secure."

— Cecilia Garcia, Program Director, Connect for Kids, The Benton Foundation.

"*Speaking for America's Children* is an exceptional reference tool for those of us interested in state issues."

— David Broder, Columnist, The Washington Post

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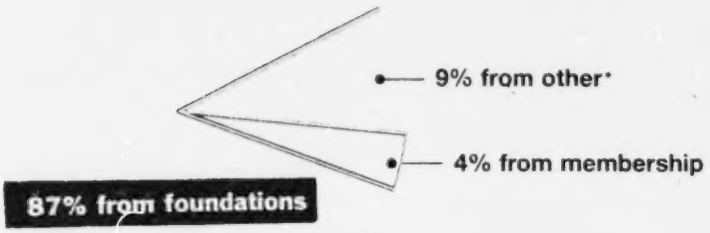
Supporters 2001-2002

NACA is grateful to the following for their dedicated support of its efforts and those of the members of its nationwide network.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
Anonymous
The Benton Foundation
Casey Family Programs
Communications Consortium Media Center
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
The Freddie Mac Foundation
The Joyce Foundation
National Assembly on
School-Based Health Care
The Prudential Foundation
Washington Dental Society
Wider Opportunities for Women
The W.K. Kellogg Foundation

A Breakdown of NACA's Financial Support

This pie-chart illustrates the percentage of NACA's income from various sources.



** Includes the sale of publications, individual donations, the Combined Federal Campaign, and other miscellaneous contributions and income.*

Looking Ahead

Indeed, much may lie ahead that we cannot foresee, but for now *outcomes* will be the NACA watchword for 2002-2003. Focusing on outcomes, NACA will work to improve the well-being of children in this country, to enhance NACA members' capacity to be effective voices for America's children and to strengthen its own organization, particularly its ability to be an effective national representative of its membership.

Project Excel's Essential Elements and Translating Research into Advocacy efforts will be increasingly important components of NACA's efforts, benefiting the field of child advocacy generally and its membership specifically. The Essential Elements initiative will also guide the topics of NACA's training and technical assistance and NACA's fundraising objectives for some time.

NACA will continue to initiate a myriad of approaches to gather, catalog and disseminate information through the NACA network about the work and structure of NACA member organizations. The experience of NACA members will always be one of the most valuable educational tools for other members.

Achieving balance between state and national work will be a significant challenge for the coming year. NACA is committed to improving its ability to serve as an early warning system for information on children's policies that seem to be gaining momentum at the state level across the country. It is increasingly apparent, however, that the NACA membership has a powerful perspective that is often missing from federal-level deliberations. NACA must amplify the voice of its membership in Washington to ensure that the federal government is indeed responsive to state gaps in services or state inequities.

The next year brings NACA to the brink of its 20th anniversary. This will be both a year for reflection and for charting a course to be an even stronger voice for America's children.

Tamara Copeland

Tamara Lucas Copeland, President
National Association of Child Advocates
June 2002

"We have enjoyed a long history with NACA through the KIDS COUNT Project and other coordinated efforts. NACA and its nationwide network have been responsible for significant improvements for kids."

— Don Crary, KIDS COUNT State Coordinator, The Annie E. Casey Foundation

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NACA's fundamental beliefs:

All children have the right to be economically secure and free from poverty and its debilitating effects; to have quality health care; to have quality educational opportunities throughout their childhood; to be safe from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence; and to live in a nurturing family, in a supportive community committed to children's development and to their maximum potential.

NACA Board of Trustees' Officers

Valora Washington, Chair
Jerry Stermer, Vice-Chair
Judy Watts, Secretary
Mitch Gross, Treasurer

NACA's Ongoing Services and Benefits

NACA provides member organizations with a wide range of services and benefits. Members receive access to:

- ☆ **Alerts** ▸ time-sensitive fax and e-mail messages inviting input to nationwide debates on children's public policy and notifying members of important advocacy opportunities within their states, such as the release of new research results
- ☆ **Audioconferences** ▸ occasional topic-specific conference calls with presentations by recognized experts
- ☆ **Child Advocacy Leadership Institute** ▸ an annual educational conference which encourages and strengthens the skills of child advocacy's future leaders
- ☆ **Forum of Chief Executives** ▸ the premiere annual gathering of leadership within NACA's membership, providing opportunities for skill-building, networking, and rejuvenation
- ☆ **Internet-based networking tools** ▸ issue- and function-specific e-mail distribution lists/listserves and the Members Only Forum, enabling NACA members to share ideas, brainstorm, and network.
- ☆ **Media, congressional and citizen contacts** ▸ referrals that allow outside parties to reach knowledgeable contacts within NACA's nationwide network which increases the profile and contacts of NACA members
- ☆ **Meetings** ▸ timely, in-depth seminars and workshops combining speakers and written information with an advocacy perspective
- ☆ **Member Mailing** ▸ a monthly electronic publication of analyses and synopses of topic-specific news, materials, tools, and activities in the states as well as in Washington which is distributed to the staff of all NACA member organizations
- ☆ **Mentoring/Skills Bank** ▸ facilitated peer-to-peer relationships, supported by funds covering travel to another member's location for technical assistance or training
- ☆ **National initiatives and organizational relationships** ▸ key connections to national and federal organizations, with balanced representation of the unique experience and perspective of NACA's state and local members
- ☆ **Publications** ▸ a diverse selection of best practices, summaries, issue/management/advocacy briefs, fact sheets, resource/tool kits, and special reports written by experienced NACA staff and NACA member executives
- ☆ **Resource library** ▸ a member-driven compilation of sample organizational documents (e.g., bylaws, personnel policies, mission statements, etc.) that can be accessed by members
- ☆ **Telephone technical assistance** ▸ on-demand strategic support and problem-solving assistance from NACA staff on policy, advocacy, and organizational development matters
- ☆ **Website** ▸ a central point of reference for child advocacy on the World Wide Web to both educate and link NACA's on-line visitors directly to NACA members' website **www.childadvocacy.org**

"The Maine Children's Alliance would not be as successful as we are if not for NACA — it not only provides the information and analysis that has made our work more effective, it also provides the support of meeting with others that have the same mission and goals and impossible obstacles." — Ellie Goldberg, Executive Director, Maine Children's Alliance

National Association of Child Advocates
1522 K Street, NW • Suite 600 • Washington, D.C. 20005-1202
Phone: (202) 289-0777 • Fax: (202) 289-0776 • www.childadvocacy.org

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